



LINCOLN CHAFEE U.S. SENATOR RHODE ISLAND

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Friday, July 29, 2005

CONTACT: Stephen Hourahan
202-224-6167

FROM KEY SEAT ON EPW COMMITTEE, CHAFEE SECURES \$1.2 BILLION *Ensures Warwick Station Will Become a Reality*

WASHINGTON, DC – Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works member, Senator Lincoln Chafee today praised the passage of a comprehensive transportation bill, known as the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA) of 2005.

Complications arose late Thursday evening when House leaders abruptly halted consideration of the bill, due to concerns over additional language regarding the closing of a military base in Montana. The House proceeded early in Friday's session to pass the bill without the disputed language, with final Senate approval following later in the day.

"The federal transportation bill is great news for Rhode Island," said Governor Donald L. Carcieri. "The funds we will receive in this legislation will help us grow our economy, improve and expand our transportation network, and enhance the quality of life for all Rhode Islanders. From tearing down the Jamestown Bridge to helping us build the train station in Warwick, this bill will have a far-reaching impact on our infrastructure."

"As a member of the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee, Senator Lincoln Chafee was instrumental in making sure that Rhode Island receives all the federal assistance we deserve," Governor Carcieri continued. "I want to thank Senator Chafee and the entire congressional delegation for coming through for the people of the Ocean State."

The legislation authorizes federal spending of \$286.5 billion over the next five years for highway, mass transit, and safety programs. Senator Chafee was a participant in the Conference Committee on the bill, which is composed of selected members of the House of Representatives and the Senate to iron out the differences between the respective versions.

-MORE-

Under the legislation, Rhode Island will receive \$1,011,350,000 through 2009 for construction and maintenance of highways and bridges. This is an increase of 23 percent, from the levels received by Rhode Island during the previous six fiscal years, 1998 – 2003.

This dollar amount means Rhode Island will be receiving \$2.21 for every \$1 it contributes nationally in gas taxes. This gives Rhode Island the second highest rate of return in the nation, with states guaranteed 90.5 cents at a minimum, and the national average being \$1 for every dollar contributed.

“It is vitally important to invest in our transportation infrastructure, ensuring that Rhode Islanders have safe and efficient mobility on our highways and transit systems. These critical dollars will create new construction jobs and boost the economic well being of our state,” Chafee said.

“I am particularly pleased that I was able to work with my Committee Chairman to include language in the bill allowing Rhode Island to shift existing unused funds to the Warwick Station Project. This project, when it is completed, will be one of the first truly intermodal facilities in the U.S., combining rail and road traffic and T.F. Green Airport into an integrated transportation system. Warwick Station will save travelers time, help the environment and most important, spur economic development,” Chafee continued.

“As a Conferee, I was able to help ensure that our state received funding for many projects.”

The legislation includes an amendment offered by Senator Chafee to allow Rhode Island to spend federal transportation funds on the Warwick Intermodal Station, including the construction of the proposed people mover between Warwick Station and T.F. Green Airport.

The legislation also includes several other projects which were requested by Senator Chafee:

Roadways and Transportation

Additionally, a total of \$53.5 million will be appropriated for improvements and changes to the state’s roadways. The Rhode Island Department of Transportation will use the funding in a variety of ways, including projects which will improve the flow of traffic through Warwick’s Apponaug Bypass (\$22 million) as well as improvements to roads and traffic circulation around Kennedy Plaza (\$2 million), Middletown’s East Main Road (\$5 million), Weybosset street (\$750,000), and Routes 1 (\$2.75 million) and 138 (\$4 million) in South Kingstown. A total of \$5 million has been set aside for improvements to the commuter rail system in Rhode Island, while an additional \$500,000 has been earmarked for transportation improvements to the areas in and around the Herreshoff Marine Museum in Bristol, RI.

-MORE-

Substantial Funds will also be appropriated for the development of the East Providence shoreline, easing access to the area south of the Washington Bridge, near Taunton and Warren Avenues. This \$12 million appropriation for the I-195 relocation project will also include the final funding necessary for burying the power lines at India Point Park. Senator Chafee recently toured the area by boat, and has expressed keen interest in this development.

Bridges

\$33.5 million has been provided for renovations, replacements, and the removal of some of Rhode Island's most important bridges. This includes \$15.5 million needed for the removal of the old Jamestown Bridge that was replaced by the Jamestown-Verrazzano Bridge in 1992. This funding, in addition to a total of \$8 million secured by Senator Chafee over the past two years, is estimated to cover the complete cost of demolition, as well as the creation of a new public fishing pier on Narragansett Bay. Bicycle access to the Jamestown-Verrazzano Bridge will also become a reality with this funding. The old bridge is currently in a degraded condition, and the Coast Guard has threatened the state with fines if the bridge is not removed in the immediate future. Currently, the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), through an ongoing Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), favors a plan that calls for demolishing the old bridge and depositing the associated debris through landfilling and the creation of artificial reefs. Senator Chafee recently visited the old bridge, and called its demolition one of his top priorities. Additionally, long-awaited improvements to the Warren Bridge, which connects Barrington and Warren, will finally be completed. This \$11 million project is very important to all three East Bay communities, including Bristol, as it would eliminate a traffic bottleneck. An additional \$7 million will go to the repair of the Pawtucket Bridge, which currently does not have a funding source.

Bike Paths and Trails

Senator Chafee has also worked to secure \$31 million for Rhode Island's bike paths and trails. \$10.5 million in funds have been secured to continue construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway, an eighteen-mile bicycle and pedestrian facility along the Blackstone River between Providence and Woonsocket. This beautiful recreational facility connects historic sites, municipal centers, state and local parks, recreational facilities, and scenic locations within the federally designated John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The primary objective of this project is to provide a safe, efficient, and continuous facility that encourages bicycle riding as an alternate means of transportation.

The remaining monies will be devoted to the completion of the Coventry Greenway/Trestle Trail bike path (\$8 million), which runs to the Connecticut border along the existing Trestle Trail. Bike paths in and along the Woonasquatucket River Greenway (\$6 million), Colt State Park (\$2 million), and Ten Mile Greenway (\$3 million) will also be funded, in addition to completion of the last phase of the South County Bike path (\$2 million).

-MORE-

Environmental Protections

Within the legislation are measures which provide a total of \$12 million for environmental protections across Rhode Island. The RI Department of Environmental Management, The Nature Conservancy, and local land trusts will use these funds to protect valuable open space in South County, particularly within the Queen's River watershed in Exeter and South Kingstown and the Pawcatuck Borderlands in Hopkinton, Exeter, West Greenwich, and Coventry. Both areas are prized for their scenic beauty and the habitat they provide for rare species, but are increasingly threatened by residential and commercial development.

These funds will also enable the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service to greatly enhance the experience of visitors to Rhode Island's five national wildlife refuges. Planned projects include improvements to the accessibility of trails for adults and children with disabilities, conversion of the Sachuest Point Visitor Center to solar power, installation of permanent educational exhibits at the Sachuest Point Visitor Center, and construction of public restrooms at the Trustum Pond NWR.

###